

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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Finding Common Ground

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President Obama addressed the predominantly Muslim world this past week in Cairo, Egypt. In his attempt to open doors and build bridges of mutual respect, the President evoked all of his followers to follow the Golden Rule, the chief rule to live by in our relationship with others. Jesus said, “*All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them*” (Matthew 7:12). In the present climate of unrest between Jew and Muslim, and Christian and Muslim; religious leaders have suggested that all religions have something in common: the Golden Rule. What a great foundation upon which to build bridges, emphasizing proper treatment of our fellow man.

If religious leaders and President Obama had examined the truth closer, they would realize Jesus’ statement is unique and surpasses all the other attempts to treat one another in the right way. For example the Muslims have been taught by their leaders the following: “*Not one of you truly believes, until you wish for others what you wish for your-*

selves.” (*The Prophet Muhammad, Hadith*). Our Muslim friends have only to “wish” upon others what they wish for themselves, while Christ enjoins us to “do” unto others what we would that others do to us. Wishing and hoping good things fall short of actually doing to others the same as we wish to be treated. By this rule of Islam, we could be a good Muslim and wish others to be clothed and fed, but not actually engage in providing food and clothing for others. But faith and the Golden Rule of Christ demand we do something about taking care of the needs of others (*James 2:15-16*), because we would like someone to actually help us in our time of need, not just wish good things for us.

The Jewish Torah exhorts followers to apply the following rule: “*What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. This is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary*” (*Hillel, Talmud, Shabbath 31 A*). Notice the Jewish standard is enjoining a negative rule in the treatment of others. If I consider something as being hateful to me, then I will “not do” that to my neighbor. But Jesus is enjoining a positive law in the

Golden Rule. It is not a matter of refraining from doing bad things to others, but doing to others good things. I can leave a lot of folks alone, and feel good that I do not treat them badly. But what Jesus places upon our mind is “what good are we actually doing toward others?” Are we actually doing the good that we would like to receive from others in the same situation?

This same “negative” approach in the treatment of others is seen in other leading religions. The Buddhists teach: “*Treat not others in ways you yourself would find hurtful*” (*The Buddha, Udana-Varga 5:18*). The Hindu’s teach: “*This is the sum of duty: Do not do to others what would cause pain if done to you*” (*Mahabharata 5:1517*).

The other religions have a “form” of the Golden Rule, but Jesus stands alone in His sayings. To exalt Jesus and Christianity’s uniqueness in actually “doing” to others the good we would like to have done to us would probably not be politically correct. But, it’s the truth!